

TX Democratic Budget Forum  
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My name is James Anthony Barnes; I am a student at ACC I am graduating next month with a degree in commercial music management, and I am the President of the Student Government Association. I am here today to express my concern about the diminishing value of the Pell Grant, which I understand under current Republican proposals will only raise a modest \$100 a year for the next five years.

I first would like to say that because of ACC I now understand what the consumer price index means. I understand what it means when the cost of living goes up and the amount of federal funds for education stagnates. It destroys many dreams.

My dream of returning to school would never have come true if it was not for federal financial aid -- Pell Grants, Subsidized loans and Federal Work Study. I would not be standing here today telling my story here at the Capitol, not once or twice but three times so far. If it were not for the Pell Grant, I would not be able to reach my full potential.

I have received the maximum amount allowed by ACC from the Pell Grant alone; I have received subsidized and unsubsidized student loans, as well as Federal Work Study. Because of the Federal Work Study Program, I was eligible for a MAP Card and Food Stamps. Due to this Federal Assistance, I was able to go to college without working a full time job. This in turn allowed me to get my degree faster than most non-traditional students have, and gave me the rare opportunity to get very involved with extracurricular activities. That will play a major part in my acceptance to UT or Texas State.

This would never have become a reality without Federal assistance. I now plan to go all the way to obtain my Masters or maybe even a PhD. I cannot accomplish that unless federal funding for school rises with the cost of living. We all know that the cost of getting an education continues to rise, but the amount of assistance continues to stagnate. If our elected officials do nothing to correct this negative correlation, the future of our children and this country are in jeopardy. It will kill many dreams.

I have been getting more and more involved in the community and people are always asking me how I was able to achieve my goals and live my dreams. I would like to be able to tell them that they too can achieve this, that they too can get help from the federal government.

I will have absolutely no glimmer of hope for them, because without money you CANNOT get an education in America. If you do not get a scholarship, then you will have to rely on someone to help you. The only other place for hardworking students of modest means is the government.

I know that those of you here understand the importance of giving people the chance to gain an education. I ask you to please take my story to your Republican colleagues in Washington to consider when making the decision on educational funding and make it your goal to ensure the citizens of our country get the education that we need to become productive members of this society.

Help break the cycle of poverty by allowing others to get the opportunity to pursue their dreams.

Lastly, this directly affects my children. I am a first generation college graduate this May and with no comparable changes to the Federal Assistance to coincide with inflation, the cycle will start all over again. Help me by helping them. This is an investment in our future. Give all of our children the same opportunity that many others have benefited from.

Thank you.